

VZCZCXRO4079
PP RUEHBW RUEHROV
DE RUEHMO #1340 1351249
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 141249Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8065
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 001340

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: RUSSIA SENDS SIGNAL TO SYRIA AND IRAN

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) On May 15, MFA Director for Middle East Affairs Sergey Vershinin said that in the wake of FM Lavrov's May 13 conversations with Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora and Egyptian FM Aboul Gheit, Russia had sent a "signal" to Damascus and Tehran that it was necessary to create the "most positive conditions possible" for the successful work of the Arab League delegation that is arriving in Beirut. Referring to the MFA's statement on the Siniora telephone call, Vershinin stressed that Russia's "principled position" was to support the constitutional institutions of Lebanon. Russia considered the Arab League initiative the most effective lever at this stage to halt the bloodshed and restore a political dialogue. Vershinin clarified that Russia had not received responses from Syria or Iran, but reiterated that Deputy Foreign Minister Saltanov appreciated his discussion with A/S Welch over next steps on Lebanon.

12. (C) Lebanese First Secretary Nagi Khalife told us that his government had called upon Russia to press Damascus and Tehran while fully understanding the limits of Russian influence. Lebanon regularly sought Russian intervention with Syria, but saw little result. This occurred most recently when parliamentary majority leader Saad Hariri came to Moscow in November 2007 seeking Russian support in ending the political deadlock over electing a new President. Khalife maintained Russia was only partly sincere in calling for an end to what an MFA spokesperson referred to as "selfish foreign interference" in Lebanon, with the GOR not wishing to press its Syrian ally too hard.
RUSSELL